

Words Of Peace & Truth

No. 98: May – August 2016 CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Philemon (<i>H. Gill</i>) | 35 |
| Feet-washing (<i>D.F. Wiseman</i>) | 39 |
| Safety in following Christ (<i>T.H. Reynolds</i>) | 42 |
| The Holy Sufferings of Jesus (<i>B.G. Hardingham</i>) | 49 |
| Suffering Love (<i>B.G.H.</i>) | 52 |
| The Believer and the World (<i>J.N. Darby</i>) | 55 |
| Quiet Resting Places (<i>Various</i>) | 57 |
| Fragments | 38 and 48 |
| Assembling Ourselves (<i>S.J.B. Carter</i>) | 60 |
| Poetic Pages | 61 |

WORDS OF PEACE & TRUTH

(Esther 9:30; see also Zechariah 8:19)

No. 98

Editorial

The world around us is certainly full of change and upheaval. The vote in favour of Britain leaving the European Union has surprised many. The ongoing conflicts in the Middle East continue to wreak suffering, death and misery. On the continent of Europe the governments are battling against unpredictable acts of savagery. So we could go on. What a price is being paid for that fateful decision, “Not this Man, but Barabbas” (John 18:40)!

But we must remember that God is supreme and above all. He will not only have His way in the end but He makes even what Satan and evil men do in the meantime to serve His purposes. “Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain” (Psalm 76:10).

Moreover, as we find in the Holy Scriptures, God sometimes uses bad people as His instruments to correct or punish those who have gone astray. On many occasions He gave His people Israel over into the hands of ungodly nations to cause them to return to Himself. And in a coming day, the Assyrian, the “king of the north,” will again be used against the largely apostate nation of Israel: “Ah! The Assyrian! The rod of Mine anger and the staff in their hand is Mine indignation” (Isaiah 10:5). Yet the faithful remnant will be delivered and the king of the north will come to a miserable end (Joel 2:20).

So perhaps in the present time too God is using the dreadful happenings in the world as a wake-up call to those who have turned their backs on Himself and His word. But the Lord is ever ready to listen to all who call upon Him: “For every one whosoever, who shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved” (Joel 2:32 and Romans 10:13).

G.S.B.

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PHILEMON

You may notice that this letter is written to the church, and it contains some very delicate touches as to those proprieties which are becoming to the people of God and which we do well to observe; but I want to take it up in a somewhat elementary way.

Onesimus is a figure of every man, for he was a runaway slave, and every man is that by nature. I do not know how Philemon acquired that right over him, whether by purchase or that he was born in his household, but he had an undoubted claim on him, and it was a most serious thing for Onesimus to disregard it. This was accentuated by the moral excellence of Philemon. His very name means "affection." Paul speaks of him as "our dearly beloved" and calls him his "fellow labourer." His wife, too, must have been a remarkably good woman. Paul speaks of her as "the beloved Apphia." She was in full sympathy with the testimony.

The assembly, too, was in their house, and the apostle adds, speaking to Philemon, "hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast towards the Lord Jesus, and towards all saints:" What an atmosphere of love pervaded that home. Upon that Onesimus turned his back. How illustrative this is of the sinner! God has indisputable claims upon every man. He has a claim on all men creatorially, and yet alas! it is true of each one of us as Daniel charged Belshazzar, "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." But how much stronger is God's claim on us in virtue of what He is! The full light of this did not shine out all at once. But now that the Son of God has come, He has made known the heart of God, and all that God is in infinite *love* has been declared in Him.

Then there is another feature connected with God that I love to think of, and my mind often reverts with deep thankfulness to it, and that is His providential, preventative care. I look back over my life as a young man and take a survey. I see the many snares,

pitfalls and dangers into which my heart might have led me, had it not been for the watchful eye of the God I did not know. Many a time He preserved me from things which might have put a blight on my whole life and robbed me of the privilege of any little service in connection with His testimony. Think of turning your back on a God like that!

If you know anything of sheep you may know that sometimes in a flock they have what they call the “bell-wether,” a leading sheep with a bell about its neck. If that sheep goes astray it is serious, for wherever it goes, into deep tangles or ditches, the whole flock will follow. Now Adam was the “bell-wether.” Onesimus was determined to break away from his master. He did not like restraint. Do *you* like divine restraint? The hatred of it is apparent everywhere. You can see it even in the children. Scripture says “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” Scripture supposes parents to be so in the mind of God that they will represent God to their children, and, in obedience to parental authority, their children will find practical salvation.

I remember a woman speaking to me once about her boy. She was a widow, but she had endeavoured to hold her boy for the Lord. Once he said to her, “Mother, I see nothing of the world as other boys do; your eye and your hand seem to be holding me all the time.” “Well,” she said, “my boy, there is a time coming when, if you come to manhood, I suppose you will be able to take your own way and go into that which is of the world if you wish to.” “Ah,” he said, “but mother, by that time I shall not want to go.” That is an illustration in connection with parental authority.

Onesimus was determined to break loose from his master. An old saying was “See Rome and die.” He had heard of its streets, its mansions, its coliseum and those gorgeous pageants enacted within its walls, and he says “I must see Rome.” I remember when, as a young man, I first landed on these shores. I had been brought up under godly care, with respect for parental authority,

but I was away from all that, and I thought, Now I can do as I like! I was a runaway like Onesimus. At last he reaches Rome! and then he is captured. How? By another slave! – a bondservant of Jesus Christ, a poor prisoner. Evidently Onesimus had got into prison. What took him there? His own will.

Why was Paul in prison? For his own will? No! He was there for the will of God. And what is he doing there? Travailing! For what? For souls – begetting sons. And this runaway slave comes under the mighty travail of that prisoner of Jesus, and he is begotten – a son in the faith. But Paul is not alone active on the line of *life*; he is active in connection with *righteousness*. He secures to Onesimus the forgiveness of his trespasses. How can he do it righteously? By charging himself with all that man's miserable breakdown. He overlooks nothing. What a picture of Jesus! It was that which captured my heart. I was a poor runaway slave, a regular Onesimus, heading for the prison-house of death, with eternal doom before me, when God, by His Spirit, awakened me. It was an intensely solemn, but a blessed moment too, for then and there I learned that Jesus had been into the prison-house of death that He might secure to God the right to administer to me the forgiveness of all my sins.

I take up the language of Paul in this letter, and with holy reverence apply it to Jesus; I hear Him speaking to the blessed God in words such as these: "If he hath wronged Thee, or oweth Thee ought, put that on Mine account; I, Jesus, have written it with Mine own hand, I will repay it." Where did He write it? He wrote it indelibly, on His cross. That is magnificent. Does it not touch your heart? Every claim of the throne has been met in the prison-house of death.

Then Paul sends Onesimus back again. He saw material in this young convert that could be used in the service of Christ, but Paul would set none of his converts to work till they were clear in their relationships with God. Paul would send him back after a larger

fashion. He says, as it were, I count upon this runaway slave of thine receiving just as royal a welcome as I would receive myself.

Do you think that Christ will put you in the presence of God on any lower level than that? No! As I hear the Lord Jesus speaking to the Father in John 17 I see, with holy joy, the place He has won for me. You get the same thought in Ephesians – “taken into favour in the *Beloved*.”

Then Paul adds: “for perhaps for this reason he has been separated from thee for a time, that thou mightest possess him fully for ever.” This is an answer to many a quibble. On all hands people call in question the divine ways. They say, If God is merciful, why did He not hold His creature in innocency? I am certain of this, that God and man have gained infinitely by the fall.

I am sure that Onesimus, on his return, got a look into Philemon’s heart he never had before, and that Philemon found in him a servant such as he never had before. Indeed Paul can now speak of him as “profitable” and to the Colossians he gives him the highest of commendations, that of a “faithful and beloved brother.” Such is the effect of grace! Blessed as innocency was, and the rest that God had in that condition, consequent upon the fall God has come out in the revelation of Himself in such a way as Adam never knew nor could know Him, and God has taken up man in Christ for the satisfaction of His heart in a fashion He never would have had in innocent Adam.

H. Gill.

Fragment

(John 6:12)

I believe the time is coming, if not come, when it will be no longer the question of professing to be Christ’s, but of whether we are living the life of Christ.

G.V. Wigram (1805-79).

FEET-WASHING

Thoughts on John 13:14

We often limit ourselves in the way we read and study the Bible by the lack of seeing the Scriptures as a whole. I encourage you to read the Holy Scriptures; to read and apply the word; both the Old and the New Testaments. Every Scripture is divinely inspired and is the infallible, inerrant word of God and cannot be broken. At times we read a verse here and there at random, and I would not underestimate the value of this. Many souls have been blessed immeasurably by a single verse, but there is immense gain in seeing how the Holy Scriptures dove-tail together in perfect harmony. It is important to read the Scriptures in context in order to get a panoramic view.

In John 14:2, the Lord Jesus speaks of abodes (mansions) in the Father's house which is clearly an allusion to the chambers mentioned in 1 Kings 6:5. The Father's house, as presented in John's Gospel, is future. The Holy Spirit has been sent to unite our hearts with Christ glorified there and to give us, as light, what will soon be our privileged part with Him in actuality. In this sense we may be privileged to touch, through Christ and by the Spirit, the bright courts that are filled with cloudless joy, as the hymn writer said:

“O boundless grace! What fills with joy
Unmingled all that enter there,
God's nature, love without alloy,
Our hearts are given even now to share.”

While we have not yet arrived at the Father's house, the Holy Spirit, as the earnest of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:14), gives us even now to taste of what belongs there.

Then, the reality of our being united to Him there, by the Holy Spirit, has the effect upon us that we come back to this scene to represent Him.

It is interesting to notice the word “mansions,” in John 14:2 in the original Greek in Strong's Concordance. This word is used only twice in the Bible; the other reference is in John 14:23. This gives a high value to our present and current responsibility and privilege.

The anti-type of 1 Kings 7:27-39 is seen in John 13. The molten sea of the earlier part of the chapter, holding two thousand baths, was stationary and had no wheels (vv. 23-26). The ten lavers (v. 27 onwards) have wheels of brass. This is very suggestive and full of meaning. There is always a wonderful amplification in typical teaching giving depth and fulness (1 Corinthians 10:11).

In John 13 we do see in moral perfection the beautiful features of the things referred to in 1 Kings 7:27-29. These are the bases, the wheels of brass, the panels, and the fillets (ledges). We see the operation of the wheels in the way in which Jesus moves the basin around as He washes the feet of the disciples. Details are given of lions, oxen, cherubim and garlands of festoon-work, all speaking of the dignity and majesty, patience, discernment and going-down-work of the Lord Jesus. A festoon has two high points with decorative work going down and returning back up, reminding us of the One who “came out **FROM GOD** and was going **TO GOD**,” John 13:3. Oh, the going-down-work of Jesus! Who can quantify what is between “from God” and “to God”! He “lays aside his garments.” Paul says that He emptied Himself and humbled Himself. What garlands of festoon-work are seen in the Lord Jesus (Philippians 2:5-8). What a lovely contemplation!

You say, how does this work out practically in the Christian circle? Surely personal sanctification and holiness of walk are necessary to have participation with Christ, both individually and church-wise. Everything that hinders must be washed away. Every bit of defilement must be removed. The great desire of the Lord Jesus is that His own should have part with Him. It requires the

laver, the action of the water. The water has to do with our state and condition of soul. (Numbers 19 presents the water of separation and Ephesians 5:26 presents the washing of water by the word.) Nothing is so delicate and so sensitive as communion (being in concert) WITH Christ. To have part WITH Him at the present time includes both privilege and responsibility. To have part with Christ is dependent, not only on our standing before God, but also on our state or condition of soul. Do you have participation with Christ? Do I know what it is to have “part with Me”?

Looking at Scripture in a broad sense and seeing the harmony and dove-tailing that there is throughout, the Apostle Paul shows John 13 to us in the Epistles to the Corinthians. The first Epistle gives us the wash-hand basin and how the water is applied to the feet of the saints. In the second Epistle we see Him using the linen towel for the comfort of the saints. How skilfully Paul could manoeuvre the wheels of brass of the laver in that first letter and with what effect! Then with the linen towel in the second letter he brings in gentle, restoring comfort. In this regard we see how thorough Paul was with the wash-hand basin and with the towel. He speaks in 2 Corinthians 10:1 of the meekness and gentleness of the Christ; not scrubbing the saints’ feet and yet, on the other hand, not giving a mere casual, cursory sprinkle and wipe either. Paul speaks of bringing every thought into the obedience of Christ, verse 10. The lions, the oxen and cherubim in all that they represent are there, and the garlands of festoon-work which speak of going down. Going-down is work and it is this kind of work that adorns the doctrine.

God grant that we be characterised by these features ourselves and so provoke one another to love and good works. “If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17).

David F. Wiseman, Los Angeles, April 2016.

SAFETY IN FOLLOWING CHRIST

Genesis 17:1-3

WHAT is before me in reading this scripture is to point out that there is a place and a path where we are safe. This is of all importance for us, when we realise the dangers and difficulties to which we are exposed. So far as I see there are in the word of God two great elements of danger to Christians: the one is spiritual wickedness, and the other is worldliness. I have no doubt both have come out in the history of the church. The former came out chiefly in connection with Romanism; the history of the church culminated in an awful display of Satanic power, spiritual wickedness, in Thyatira. We may think that we are delivered from Romanism; still, there is the danger around us; and although Romanism is not in supremacy in this country, yet the elements of spiritual wickedness are around us. What I call spiritual wickedness lies in using the knowledge of divine things like Balaam did. Balaam may have descended from Abraham by Keturah, and had a knowledge of divine things; Job had also, he knew the name of the Almighty. Balaam knew it as a name; he heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High; he had an outward knowledge of divine things, but he sought to join it to enchantments, in order to gain an influence over the minds of men. Balaam's doctrine was coming in in the church at Pergamos, and it came to its full-blown height in Thyatira, and got its judgment from Christ. We can often see that there are certain things which are not the mistakes of men's minds as to doctrine (we all make mistakes); but there are certain things that Satan is behind. Paul foretells that in the latter times there would be seducing spirits and doctrines of demons; such are not errors of men's minds in regard to divine things. We may see at times this working of Satan with the things of God. Balaam represents an awful spirit of wickedness, and the effect of it is seen in Thyatira. You may

always detect it, because there is a power dominating people in a way that they cannot help; even common sense will not deliver them from the power of spiritual wickedness. We may not know very much about it, and I do not want to occupy you with evil; but it is well to be aware that there is such a thing as spiritual wickedness which dominates people's minds by means of an outward knowledge of the things of God. The Romish church preserves the great leading truths of Christianity – the Trinity, the atonement, judgment to come, but they use these things in a diabolical way. That is all around us, on the one side.

The danger *for us* is what we see in Sardis, and that is worldliness. When Christ judged Thyatira, there was a distinct work of God begun outside what had been the historical church, and Christ presented Himself to Sardis as the One who had the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars – all the needed guidance with power and light for this new work. The seven Spirits of God denote the Spirit's power in government which could have guided the church through this scene. But Sardis, instead of using what Christ had for the church, accepted the power and patronage of the world, and thus you have so-called Christian countries, and Sardis is treated by Christ as the world. Worldliness is more the danger for us – to fall in with the course of things here. The result in Protestant bodies is that instead of being governed by the Spirit of God, they are dominated by the world, and the tendency of such bodies is simply to fall in with the ways of the world. These are the two great characteristic dangers in the closing state of things in which we are. Men are either dominated by spiritual wickedness or by the world.

But what I feel to be our privilege is that we know another Man, the blessed Man who came here from God and has gone to God, who did God's will and glorified Him here. If man

was the means, in Satan's hand, of all the dishonour to God that Satan could possibly work in the heart of man, there was a blessed Man who glorified God here, and because God has been glorified in Him He has been glorified in God. But not only is there another *Man*, but there is another *place* where that Man is. I would like to ask myself and you, how far are we acquainted with that place? I trust we are acquainted with the blessed Man; but how much do we know about the place?

In regard to the two evils I have spoken of; at the present moment the sphere of the power of spiritual wickedness is in the heavenly places, and Satan works from thence all the mischief that is here upon the earth. Whether it was Judas betraying Christ, or the utter falsification of the church here upon earth by spiritual wickedness, the sphere of spiritual power is in the heavenly places. Now what is coming to pass is that the heavenly places are going to be cleared of Satan's power. Christ has already gone up above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, but Satan is not yet cast out. I am not referring to the fact that the church is united to Him there; I merely look at the great fact that Christ is there, that He has gone up far above all heavens. It must be plain to the youngest that it will be a wonderful moment when the heavens are cleared of the powers of spiritual wickedness, but it will be a terrible moment for the earth when Satan is cast down. When that takes place Christ and the saints will take their place in the heavenlies. I say to the youngest here, you are to have your place with Christ in those heavenly places when the powers of evil are cast out of them; and what is going on at the present time is that the Spirit of God is educating the saints in the knowledge of Christ. When He was here upon earth, He was leading His disciples into the knowledge of heavenly associations. He attached them first to Himself, and then sought to attach them to the place where He was going, because that was really the place where

they were to shine forth with Christ in the kingdom of their Father. What a moment that will be when in the heavenly places, instead of Satan and the power of evil, the saints will shine forth with Christ!

Now let me ask you, Do you want to shine in this world, where you are in danger from these two great elements – spiritual wickedness in what is called the church, and worldliness? Or do you know what it is in any measure to have been attracted to the blessed Man who glorified God here and who has been glorified of God there – to be on the way to the place where we shall shine with Him, and to be educated for that place whilst here?

I refer to the last verse of Psalm 133: “As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.” I have no doubt in my mind that the idea is, that Hermon lifted its lofty head into the clouds and caught the dew of heaven, and that it came down on Zion, which was the earthly centre. It is put in connection with the anointing oil that came on the head of Aaron, a figure of the High Priest, Christ; then the power of the Spirit goes down to the lowest point, the skirts of the garments. I want you to see what a wonderful thing it will be for heaven to be filled with saints who are in heavenly association with Christ, but the blessing of the heavenly places will flow down to the earthly centre; there God commands His blessing, heavenly blessing by the Spirit, and there will be the fruits of life springing up down here. I do not take “life for evermore” as meaning merely that people will live for ever; but all the blessed fruits of life will spring up here in response to the blessing from the Head in heaven.

Now we belong to that system of the heavens; and how are we now to enter into heavenly things unless we are in heavenly association; not merely attracted to that blessed Man because of

what there is in Him for our need, but because He is the Head and centre of heavenly blessing? I daresay the mustard tree (*see Matthew 13:31,32*) assumed its character because it was nourished by the things in the world; all that is of God in the earth has been falsified through Satan's power; but what a blessing to know that the true thing is all of Christ! Divine order is the most wonderful thing. In connection with the assembly the apostle speaks of it: "The head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." There is a lovely divine order in everything that is from God, and it is established in Christ. The man and the woman fall into their respective places, and this divine order is seen in Christ and the church. What a beautiful picture of divine order comes before us in that which Balaam saw from the top of the mountain; he looked down upon the tribes of Israel abiding in their tents around the tabernacle; he was compelled to see and speak of it. If you had gone into their tents you would have heard murmuring and complaining; but under the eye of the Spirit of God, there was Israel abiding in their tents in divine order. It was a picture of the millennium; then everything on this earth will be in divine order.

I would not like any to merely say, what a lovely idea! But I would like the youngest to say, I belong to that order and I shall be in heavenly association with Christ when it is brought in. What is going on now is that the Spirit of God is associating your heart and mine with that blessed Man in the place where He is, that we should know heavenly association. I often feel like a man who is going along a path where he is conscious of dangers on the right hand and on the left. There is spiritual wickedness on the one side, spiritual dangers, working in all kinds of ways; and on the other hand, I have the consciousness of what man is; of man's glory and world. Satan may be behind it all; still, I make a distinction between what is merely human on the one side and spiritual wickedness on the other, though both may coalesce. But there is a pathway, where I feel I am

safe as being under the eye of Christ. If you walk the path that Christ walked, it leads to heaven; if you are drawn to the heavenly Man and realise your association with Him and the place where He has gone, you feel that the whole way along Christ has made a road for you, and that you are safe, because every bit of that path is filled with the light and power of Christ. It is not that He fills all things yet, but He has filled every step of that path with the light of what He is. If we keep to it, we shall walk in safety. It is in that path that we get to know more of Him, and so get our education to be in the heavenly places, when Satan and all his powers are cast out, and to come out with Christ in due time. Another thing I feel is this: if we do not understand our place with Christ up there, we are always, so to speak, battling with evil. I may have to battle with evil here and there; but what I find is, if I can only get above the evil to the place where Christ is, I breathe another atmosphere. I do not doubt there is conflict; but we are not always fighting with the world on the one side and the powers of wickedness on the other; that is not our normal position. Our position is as children of Jerusalem above, to be breathing the air of liberty. If we only knew our heavenly association, we should be like men who leave the oppressive atmosphere of the valley below to take deep breaths on the mountain top; there is a liberty and life up there beyond all that is down here; and instead of being oppressed with the atmosphere of this world, and hardly keeping our heads above water, we should be in liberty, knowing our association with Christ in heavenly places.

In Genesis 15, Abraham found out what God could be *to him* as a Justifier. Here in chapter 17 he is called from the earth to walk before God. In chapter 15 the promise did not go beyond earth; but here God says to him, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." He does not say, Abraham, I will tell you what I will be to you; but He calls him up to

Himself, and says, “Walk *before me*,” and then he gets his name altered. God knows him after another fashion, he is no longer Abram, but Abraham, a father of many nations, not merely of one nation; and he becomes the depositary of God’s thoughts in regard to the blessing of the world. His whole vision is *enlarged*. Then two things come in in connection with his being called to God’s side of things, circumcision, that is, he is cut off from the flesh, as a ground of confidence, and from its associations; secondly, Isaac comes in, the child of holy laughter, and God’s covenant is established in him.

We may be poor things in ourselves, but we do not want to keep saying, “My leanness!” (*Isaiah 24:16*) Look at what Christ is! It is Christ and heaven, not what *we* are nor the place here. We sing “That we our nothingness may know,” and that is well, but we have also to walk in faith while here below.

Think of it! you are going to be with Christ, and coming out with Christ; you belong to Christ now, and it is yours to accept the death of Christ here. If you are in the path of Christ, I am persuaded you will be safe, because there is not a bit of it that is not filled with the power and wisdom of God in Christ. The pathway that Christ has trodden is a path filled with divine power, and in it you will be safe from the influences of the world on the one hand and the power of spiritual wickedness on the other.

T. H. Reynolds, Rotherham, March 28th, 1902; reprinted from “Food for the Faithful,” Vol. V.

Fragment

Nothing so helps the Christian to endure the trials of his path, as the habit of seeing *God in everything*. There is no circumstance, be it ever so trivial or ever so common-place, which may not be regarded as a messenger from God, if only the ear be circumcised to hear, and the mind spiritual to understand the message. *C.H.M.*

THE HOLY SUFFERINGS OF JESUS (THE ALTAR OF ACACIA WOOD)

“And thou shalt make an altar of shittim [or, ‘acacia’] wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits. And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: his horns shall be of the same: and thou shalt overlay it with brass. And thou shalt make his pans to receive his ashes, and his shovels, and his basons, and his fleshhooks, and his firepans: all the vessels thereof thou shalt make of brass. And thou shalt make for it a grate of network of brass; and upon the net shalt thou make four brasen rings in the four corners thereof. And thou shalt put it under the compass of the altar beneath, that the net may be even to the midst of the altar. And thou shalt make staves for the altar, staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with brass. And the staves shall be put into the rings, and the staves shall be upon the two sides of the altar, to bear it. Hollow with boards shalt thou make it: as it was shewed thee in the mount, so shall they make it” (Exodus 27: 1-8).

Verse 1 of Exodus 27 says, “Thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood” (or, ‘acacia wood’). Whoever heard of an altar of *wood*? It is difficult to understand, for an altar has to withstand the flames of heat of the fire which consumes the offering laid upon it. Yet in the tabernacle system, the pattern of which had been given to Moses, the Divine commandment was that the altar of burnt offering (to give it its full title) was to be made of wood, as it had been shown to Moses on the mount (verse 8). How extraordinary, we might say. It must have been a very special kind of wood. It was; for the acacia wood is a type of the *humanity of Jesus*, which alone could endure the fire of God’s holy judgment upon sin and upon sins. He was the sacrifice, for He offered Himself without spot to God (Hebrews 9: 14). He was the altar, for as sent by God

He bore the Divine condemnation of sin (Romans 8: 3). While Paul says, “Christ *died* for our sins” (1 Corinthians 15: 3), Peter says, “Christ also hath once *suffered* for sins” (1 Peter 3: 18). This reminds us of those holy sufferings which He alone could endure, as the hymn says –

None could follow there, blest Saviour,
When Thou didst for sin atone;
For those sufferings, deep, unfathomed,
Were, Lord Jesus, Thine alone!

(M. W. Biggs, 1931)

The humanity of Jesus was unique. He was a Man of another order altogether, ‘the second Man, from heaven’ (1 Corinthians 15: 47). All others amongst whom He moved down here were “of the earth, earthy” (or, ‘made of dust’). Yet He was a true Man, whilst never ceasing in Himself to be who He ever was, “over all, God blessed for ever” (Romans 9: 5). He was the true ‘acacia wood,’ growing before God “as a root out of a dry ground” (Isaiah 53: 2).

The variety of acacia used in the tabernacle was a desert tree, capable of surviving in stony soil and in regions of low rainfall. Jesus lived in the *conscious enjoyment* of His Father’s love. Even when He was weary with the way He had come to meet one needy soul, He could say to His disciples who were urging Him to eat, “I have meat (‘food’) to eat that ye know not of” (John 4: 32).

The burning heat of the day in desert conditions, followed by the cold of the night, result in abundance of dew, especially upon the hillsides. How suggestive this is: how often Jesus, the true ‘acacia tree,’ spent the night alone upon the mountain, in prayer!

The first 8 verses of Leviticus 27 give the details of the construction of the altar. The Scripture makes it clear that the basic material was acacia wood, but that the whole altar was “overlaid with brass” (or, ‘encased in copper’) (verse 2), in order that it might be able to endure the fire. On this account it has been

alluded to frequently as the ‘brazen’ altar, although it is probable that what we call ‘brass’, being a compound, was not known in the time of Moses. In the very middle of the altar was the grate (or, ‘grating’), of network of brass (or, ‘copper’) (verses 4 and 5), on which the fire was “burning upon the altar all night unto the morning” (Leviticus 6: 9).

All this illustrates for us in type, what was the *intensity of the holy sufferings* of Jesus in order that the righteousness of God might be maintained! There was what He suffered *externally*, but deeper far was what He suffered *inwardly*. The inwards and the legs of the burnt offering had to be reverently washed in water, and *all* was burned on the altar, “an offering made by fire of a sweet savour unto the LORD” (Leviticus 1: 9) –

Holy vessel of God’s pleasure
Was that body held by Thee;
Nothing but His will, Thy measure
From the manger to the tree.

(H. S. T. Bullock)

The altar is that which sustains the sacrifice. In Matthew’s gospel the Lord Jesus raises the question as to which is the greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifies the gift? (Matthew 23:19). In his own giving, in laying down His own life, the altar and the gift were commensurate, for *He was both the sacrifice and the altar*. He was also the offering priest. We owe all to *His priestly service*, as well as His holy sufferings, for it was the *priest* who made atonement for the sinner, as is said in Leviticus 4: 20 and later verses.

The fire upon the altar was *never to go out* (Leviticus 6: 13), and every day in the sanctuary, sweet incense was offered before God (Exodus 30: 7,8); but what brought out the fragrance was the fire taken from the altar in a censer (Leviticus 16: 12,13). How we ever need to be maintained in our appreciation of the sufferings of

Jesus! Even in the Holiest, which means the immediate presence of God, the first thing to which the Holy Spirit calls attention in Hebrews 9, verses 3 and 4, is the *golden censer*, that carried the fire from the altar.

Those holy sufferings are never to be forgotten in our service to God, for “Christ being come an high priest of good things to come” [that is, the promised blessings to come in with Him] “by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Hebrews 9: 11,12). May we each have our part in approaching, as it were, with our censers filled with the appreciation of the sufferings of Jesus!

SUFFERING LOVE (MYRRH)

“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh” (Matthew 2: 11).

“And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury” (John 19: 39, 40).

“All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad” (Psalm 45: 8).

“A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts” (Song of Solomon 1: 13).

These passages of Scripture all contain a reference to myrrh in relation to our Lord Jesus. Now, ‘myrrh’ was a fragrant resinous

gum that oozed from wounds in the bark of a particular tree, the gum being distilled as ‘tears.’ It was greatly valued not only on account of its enduring fragrance, but as a symbol of unswerving devoted affection. It was prepared both as an extract or liquid, and as an ointment, and as such was greatly prized. How much more valuable it is for us to look beyond the type or symbol, and see it as identified with the *suffering love of Jesus*.

In the Gospel of Matthew, myrrh was among the gifts brought to Him by the wise men at His birth. In John 19, it was brought with aloes by Nicodemus in connection with the burial of Jesus. Then in Psalm 45 which is headed “a Song of loves,” or “a song of the Beloved,” the writer refers to the king’s garments as smelling of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. Finally, in the Scripture in the Song of Solomon, the speaker tells what her beloved is to her – “a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me.”

Thus we see that this feature of myrrh is attached to the Lord Jesus at the time of His entry into this world as a lowly babe, and then at His burial; that its fragrance is spoken of prophetically in the Psalm as pervading His garments; and that in type, to the one who loves Him He has become infinitely precious as a “bundle of myrrh.”

It is specially affecting to see that, right from the very outset of His days upon earth, the Lord Jesus was *distinguished in this unique way*. What the wise men brought indicated the features that were His or were to mark Him. *Gold* was figurative of the manifestation of God which was perfectly seen in Him, who was a Divine Person come into manhood, “God with us” (Matthew 1: 23). *Frankincense*, when placed upon the meat-offering (or, ‘oblation’), was all to be offered to God (Leviticus 2: 2), thus speaking of what would be wholly and entirely for God in that perfect life here. The *myrrh* is a touching indication that the pathway of the One before whom they fell down, was to be marked by suffering love.

This suffering love was to shine out in Jesus right through His earthly pathway, and as we contemplate Him we can well exclaim with John the baptist, “***Behold the Lamb of God!***” (John 1: 36).

At the very end of that pathway, Nicodemus, one who had been ashamed to be seen speaking by day with the despised and rejected Saviour, now came forward publicly with his appreciation of the suffering love that had taken Jesus to the cross. It was ‘about a hundred pounds weight of myrrh and aloes’, all tenderly lavished upon that precious body. How the affections of Nicodemus had been enlarged since the night when he first came to Jesus!

As we read the words of the speakers in Psalm 45 and Song of Solomon 1, which both refer to this feature of ‘myrrh’ as connected in type with His Person, let us respond with ***our appreciation*** of His suffering love. When we consider our Lord Jesus, where He now is, ‘raised from the dead, and set at God’s own right hand in the heavenly places’ (Ephesians 1: 20), and as is said prophetically ‘anointed with the oil of gladness’ (Psalm 45: 7), how stirring it is to our affections, when we are drawn in spirit into the holy intimacy of that circle of which He is the centre, to know that ‘all His garments’ are thus fragrant (Psalm 45: 8).

His suffering love is never to be forgotten. It appeals more and more to our hearts, bringing to our remembrance that lowly pathway in which it was expressed in all its fulness. Surely we can join with the one in the Song of Solomon who says “A bundle of myrrh is my beloved unto me”. The sweetness and fragrance of His suffering love is the ***choicest memory that we can treasure*** of Him in the present night of His absence, infinitely precious to every lover of Jesus.

The above two articles are taken from “Bible Ministry by B.G. Hardingham” (1894-1973), a Words of Peace & Truth publication (see website for details).

THE BELIEVER AND THE WORLD

When at first we tasted the blessing of salvation and redemption in our hearts, what was the world to us? It was all nothing; just trees, and fields, and roads, that was all.

We are apt to get back gradually into natural associations; but it was not so with Paul. He was maintained in the effect that the first revelation of Christ had produced upon his soul. Really, when we are first converted, the world is like a parcel of gewgaws,* not cared for by us at all. Men are but big children. A child likes its little carriage, to draw about with a doll in it; and a lady likes a carriage drawn about with herself inside, dressed up like a doll. We know how present things do affect the mind, but it shows how quickly the mind gets off its object. We need power so that Christ may dwell in the inner man. And then there is the practical gaining of strength day by day. The fact that the world is judged, though believed in by us, yet often it is not practically judged in our lies; but, through grace, this gradually becomes true to us in detail.

When a certain breaking down of self takes place in a man's life, it produces a total change in him, but afterwards he has to learn it all in detail.

There is a complete change. He has accepted death really, by faith, and so he says, "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"; but then he has to watch against details and judge them; and if they start up again, then he must deal with them still more severely.

Of course, all this is after the eye of faith has been directed to the cross of Christ. It is a great mercy when, at starting, the Christian makes, by grace, a clean cut with the world. If my heart

Concise Oxford English Dictionary: gewgaw: a showy thing, especially one that is useless or worthless.

is not *full* of Christ, outward things will produce their impression. If I am not full of Him, ‘Oh,’ I shall think, ‘what a beautiful picture!’ That shows there is a vacant space left in my heart for such a thing to come in. The world is like Samson’s hair, the roots of which, in a certain sense, still remain. Or else, it is like the twigs of willow in the ground, which will sooner or later begin to grow again. If we are firm, the world will become, of course, only more adverse; it will not tolerate, nor even bear with decided Christianity. A Christian who gets into the world is not happy anywhere, for there is nothing in the world that can satisfy him, and then, when he gets among his fellow-Christians, his conscience reproves him. He does not grow, nor does he get the enjoyment of the things that are in the word of God, and which are really his own.

A clean cut with the world is very often distinct from having the sentence of death written in ourselves.

Extracted from notes of a Bible reading with J.N. Darby on Philippians 3; “Notes and Jottings,” pages 218-9.

Self-judgment

Nothing but the sense of the presence of God can keep us in self-judgment; we may be ever so sincere, but self is not judged except in the presence of God.

We may not be always conscious of it, whilst seeking to do the right thing; but let something turn up, and we find flesh is still alive!

But when the presence of God is realised, the practical state of the soul is totally different; there is then a sense of dependence, and of lowliness, and of nothingness which we only learn in God’s presence.

From the same volume, page 213.

EXCERPTS FROM “QUIET RESTING PLACES”

(Extracts from Letters)

Strength and Continuance

THE Lord is able to sustain us at *all* times, and under *all* circumstances, as well as able to heal our diseases. Blessed be His name for ever!

We are watched over and provided for, and when we reach the end of the journey we shall be surprised at the way our God has led us, and we shall be filled at the same time with praise. I have no doubt whatsoever that we shall look back to our wilderness journey and then we shall praise Him for all the tenderness which He showed in His ways with us, and the adaptation to our needs of all we suffered from while down here. We may well take courage, then, as we praise our God in anticipation of that time.

E.D. (probably Edward Dennett)

IT is nice to see one's brethren. There is mutual refreshment, even if one cannot impart very much.

Exhortation is very important. Teaching imparts instruction, but exhortation is encouraging and stimulating one another to press on in the path which teaching has indicated to us. It incites to movement of soul, and nothing can be of greater practical importance than that we should be kept in spiritual movement. The ministry of Christ supplies motive for all movement, and it is He Himself who is the goal towards which all spiritual movement leads – the Prize of hearts that seek Him and follow because they love Him. . . .

I trust you find much comfort in the love of Christ in your long isolation. He has some very special thought of good for you in all His way with you.

Charles A. Coates.

IT is good to consider *Christ*. We lose much of the sweetness we might enjoy by coming to scripture to find what relates to ourselves. That is, our own comfort, or circumstances, or personal exercises, often have predominance in our thoughts. But all these are divinely met, and much more than met, as we consider *Him*. And as we do so the heart is invigorated in every spiritual capacity, and its affections quickened, in presence of what is infinitely perfect and blessed. And none have such deep and true self-judgment as those whose earnest gaze is fixed on that holy One.

We have been seeing lately here that the sin-offering comes after the three others in which the perfections of Christ are disclosed. That is, it is in the light of all that Christ is, and only there, that we can rightly estimate sin, or value the holy work in which it has been condemned and wholly removed from before God for ever. Ponder Him as the burnt-offering, the meat offering, and the peace-offering – and what a delightful and satisfying study this is for the heart – and then you will judge that all that is not Christ must be condemned, that He alone may remain for God and for His saints; and the sin-offering is the way in which this has been accomplished.

C.A.C.

“**WEEPING** may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” (Psa. 30:5). If we have to write our histories as natural men we must write them in this order, morning and evening; but we have commenced a new history with God, a spiritual history, so *now* it is evening and morning. In Genesis 1 it is put this way, evening and morning; this is the triumph of God. Morning and evening would have been defeat.

The end of all the ways of God will be the repose of His nature.

W.J.

(probably Captain W. Johnson)

“WE know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” The ways of God are often mysterious to us; we cannot explain the why and the wherefore of what He does. But it is our privilege always to trust with perfect confidence, and be in peace. We have to judge of His ways in the light of what He has done in the past, and what He has purposed to do in the future. In the past He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. As to the future, He has predestined that we shall be conformed to the image of His own Son. All between must be governed by that perfect love which has been so wonderfully expressed in this double way.

F.H.B. (probably Dr. Frank Bodman)

Prayer

WHAT a blessed Master we have! He really does everything Himself, and yet He loves to associate His own with Himself in all that His grace does. Indeed He loves to have us with Him in all things, and to share all that He has and all that He does with us.

Prayer gives great efficacy even to the feeblest service, and I trust that in spite of our feeble bodies we may be able to continue in persevering prayer as to all the Lord's interests, and particularly for such of those interests as He permits us to touch personally.

I covet more and more the sense of His support; this is the sweetest part in any service, and nothing compensates for the lack of it. It is just as far as He is with us in it that any service has value.

C.A.C.

Everlasting Love

How faithful the Lord is in His constant care and service toward us; and how we need to realise what we owe to His activities as Shepherd, Advocate, High Priest, and Head! And in addition to all this we await Him from heaven as Saviour, to change our body of humiliation and fashion it like His body of glory; I am sure this thought must appeal to you more than to many.

The end of all these various and gracious activities is the presentation of the assembly to Himself, a glorious assembly without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and blameless. As He contemplates it He will discern every feature of it to have been derived from Himself and at the same time will accept the assembly for eternity as given to Him by God the Father to be his Helpmeet, or, as J. N. D. beautifully translates it into French, “une aide qui lui corresponde” (Gen. 2:18). Marvellous thought, “une aide”! No thought of God is allowed to lapse, and this one, though belied by the first woman, is to be fully realised in the assembly as united to Christ.

J.H.B.

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“The Assembling of Ourselves Together”

(Hebrews 10:25)

In assembling – be punctual

In clothing – be simple

In reading – be careful

In speaking – be audible

In listening – be teachable

In ministering – be profitable

In singing – be devotional

In giving – be liberal

In separating – be prayerful,

Thankful, peaceful, mindful, heart-full (*Phil. 4:6,7*)

S.J.B. Carter

POETIC PAGES

“The King in His Beauty”

Psalm 45.

LIKE a pent-up fountain bursting,
Like an overflowing well,
Like a ready writer thirsting,
I must of Thy beauty tell.

Thou art fairer than the fairest,
Is the bursting of my song.
Thou art rarer than the rarest,
All the sons of men among.

Grace into Thy lips is pouring,
God hath all Thy worth confessed,
Far beyond all creatures soaring,
He hath made Thee, the Most Blest.

Thou hast loved the Way of rightness
Hated that abhorred by God.
Path of light's translucent brightness,
To His glory Thou hast trod.

Therefore hath He Thee anointed
With joy's oil in great degree,
Far beyond all those appointed,
Thy companions yet to be.

All thy robes with myrrh are smelling –
Cassia, aloes, all perfumes,
From Thy palace-love's own dwelling –
Where eternal beauty blooms,

And Thy love is ever vernal:
Vast as ocean without shore –
PEERLESS MAN AND GOD ETERNAL,
Thou art blest for evermore!

Oh! the perfect moral beauty!
Oh! the wisdom of His ways!
Sacred privilege, not duty,
'Tis to bow and give Him praise –
For His wisdom, all-excelling,
For His truth so firm and sure,
For His love that knows no quelling –
GIVE HIM GLORY EVERMORE!

Alex Stevenson

Reprinted from "Scripture Truth," 1918.

Acquiescence

Thy will is ever right, Thy way,
Though seeming hard, the best,
And if we cannot understand,
We'll trust, and leave the rest.
Yea, Lord, we leave it all to Thee,
The Giver of all good;
We may not plan our earthly way,
We would not if we could.
But we will trust Thy hand of love,
And, guided by Thine eye,
We'll bear each trial, and pray to be
Right exercised thereby.

D.H.

He is the One

John 1:45; Luke 24:21.

He is the One, though hated and despised,
Who came to us as had been prophesied.
The very One of whom the prophets spoke,
The Light of nations, also Israel's Hope.

He is the One, Son of the Living God,
Who here as perfect Man His pathway trod.
Yet in the world He made He was not known;
Received not, e'en by those who were His own.

He is the One: Jesus of Nazareth,
Marked out by God with power while here on earth,
Displaying goodness to our fallen race,
Himself expressing always truth and grace.

He is the One whom men pursued to death;
"Take Him away" they clamoured with their breath.
But, ris'n again as He had always said,
He is the glorious Firstborn from the dead.

He is the One, excluded by the world,
At Whom the spite of fallen man was hurled;
But now, redemption's work for ever done,
Chosen, elect, the precious Corner-Stone.

He is the One, the Lion of Judah's kith,
Sought for in heaven, in earth and underneath,
Yet there He stands, the Lamb who once was slain,
Acclaimed by all as worthy now to reign.

He is the One, the Man of God's right hand
Who brings about all God has ever planned –
God's glorious Son, Man of the Father's choice;
Lord Jesus Christ, in Thee our hearts rejoice. (G.S.B.)

NOTE

The Editor trusts that the selection and composition of material for this magazine has been undertaken with the Lord's guidance and that the contents are of moral and spiritual value and appropriate to present needs. The only infallible statement of truth, however, is found in the Holy Bible and the reader is, therefore, urged to follow the practice of the Bereans, who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). The Editor is always happy to receive comments and inquiries, and to consider suggested articles for inclusion in future issues.